

## TAMING YOUR TENSION

Muscle tension is like a car that's idling too fast. The car revved up and working hard but nothing useful is happening. There's more wear and tear on the motor. Not only that, but the motor is burning more fuel and creating more pollution.

With muscle tension your muscles are working hard, but are not doing anything that useful. Tension doesn't help you to move and it certainly doesn't make your muscles stronger. It doesn't really accomplish anything at all.

It does, however, cause a lot of wear and tear on the body. It strains the tendons that hold your muscles to your bones. It pulls the joints tighter together not only causing horrible grinding and crunching sounds but also causes the cartilage in your joints to wear out. Tension limits your movement, interfere with your coordination and may make you more accident prone.

Tense muscles burn up the fuel in your muscles, making you feel tired. They also create the equivalent of car exhaust-toxic waste products that fatigue your muscles and make them feel sore and achy.

### YOU KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE - TENSION IS NOT GOOD

It is important that you get your tension under control. Not only will you feel more comfortable, but you will prevent a lot of problems from occurring, from kinks in your neck to early arthritis. To manage your tension, it helps to know what causes it.

### THE CULPRITS

Stress is one of the major sources of muscle tension. When under stress, you become like a turtle trying to pull its head into its shell. Your shoulders round forward and lift up as your head pulls back. If your stress level is high, you may actually notice your shoulders around your ears. More often than not, the stress isn't quite so significant and the shoulder muscles simply tighten up.

Just sitting or staying still for periods of time will also cause your muscles to tighten up. By remaining static, you are in a sense training your muscles to lock your back or neck in a certain position. It takes some time for the muscles to relax. The longer you sit without moving, the more you train your muscles to lock into position and the longer it takes for it to release them.

In looking at the way that tension is created, you can see that the areas that are most vulnerable to tension are your neck, shoulders, and back. Although tension can develop in any muscle in your body, these are the areas that are most commonly affected.

## TENDERNESS AND TENSION

How do you know if your muscles are tense? One of the best indicators is tenderness in your muscles. Tenderness is the discomfort you feel when you press on the muscles.

When your muscles are healthy and relaxed, they won't be tender. You won't feel any discomfort even if you massage therapist is applying lots of pressure.

Blood vessels normally deliver oxygen and nutrients to a muscle and take away waste products (also called metabolites). When your muscles are tense, they essentially squeeze their own blood vessels. The muscles are working hard and creating lots of waste that doesn't wash out of the muscle. As these metabolites begin to accumulate, they start to irritate pain nerves. If the tension is significant, you'll actually start to feel achy. If the tension is less severe, the nerves become sensitive and any added stimulus, like a squeeze to the muscle causes discomfort.

## MASSAGE TO THE RESCUE

Massage plays an important role in helping you deal with tension. At **Therapeutic Massage**, your therapist is like a mechanic, who can adjust how fast your "muscle motors" are idling.

Massage has a twofold action. First, it helps induce a relaxation response in your body. This reduces the common defensive reactions in your body, including the turtle-in-shell action of your neck muscles. Relaxation causes your brain and nervous system to slow down and this in turn lowers the tension levels of all the muscles in your body.

Secondly, with massage your muscles are pulled and stretched. This physically releases the muscle. In addition, the sensations that your muscles feel both conscious and subconscious, give your brain information about the level of tension that exists in your muscles. This helps your nervous system to adjust your muscles to a normal level tone.

The wonderful thing about massage is that its effect on tension is almost instantaneous. You feel the tension leaving your body immediately. You don't have to wait days or weeks to see results.

However, don't expect long-lasting results from just one



Do these **Shoulder Rolls** to release tension in your neck and shoulders. Lift your shoulders up toward your ears. Then slowly roll your shoulders in a big circle moving them back, down, forward and up. Repeat several times and then reverse directions.



### Neck Rolls

Drop your head straight forward toward the floor and let it hang for a moment. Be sure to keep your back upright. You may feel a slight stretch in your neck or upper back. Then slowly roll your head to the right. Continue until your head is tilted to the right as illustrated above.

Let your head roll back down and continue the movement around until your head is tilted to the left. Roll your head back and forth slowly like this several times.

“ A tense muscle will squeeze off its own blood supply and cause nerve irritating metabolites to accumulate in the muscle.”

“ The effect of massage on tension is almost instantaneous.”

massage. Although this may happen, factors like stress and a secondary lifestyle are likely to perpetuate your tension. For this reason regular massage is important.

Typically, when you start to get massage, you may experience a great deal of discomfort and your therapist may have to work rather lightly. As your muscles relax and your circulation becomes more normal, the tenderness starts to decrease. Subsequent massages are usually much more comfortable. You may find that you have to ask your therapist to work deeper to get the same level of sensation.

If you find that your muscles are always tender when you visit your massage therapist, its time to consider getting more frequent treatments and taking a more active approach to managing your tension.

Regular massage treatments will not only reduce your tension, but will train your muscles to maintain a lower level of tension or to recover from tension more quickly.

Once your muscles learn what its like to be relaxed, you can reduce the frequency of your massage treatments. At that point, you can use massage more as a maintenance tool and schedule treatments for the year, just as you schedule regular tune-ups for your car.

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU NEED A TUNE UP?

As a general rule, many therapist suggest monthly maintenance treatments. However, there are many factors that determine your need for massage. Since your massage therapist knows you and your body, it's best to ask for specific recommendations.

## DON'T "TRAP" YOUR TENSION

One of the areas most likely to get tense is the shoulders. The muscles that makes up the shoulders is called the "trapezius"-usually called the

"traps". It's an easy name to remember because this is the muscle that traps your tension. You can help prevent muscle tension from building up in the muscle.

If you are sitting or standing still for any significant period of time, be sure to move the muscle through a full range of motion once in a while. We suggest the 20/20 Rule; For every twenty minutes that you are inactive, spend twenty seconds moving. This helps ensure that your muscles don't have the opportunity to look into any particular position.

Use the two simple exercises in this newsletter to bring your traps through a full range of motion and to keep your muscles relaxed and tension free.

**For an appointment or more  
information call:  
(613) 271-8227**

---

## BALDVIN VIDARSSON

45 Windcrest Court Kanata, ON K2T 1B5  
baldvin@therapeuticmassage.ca  
(613) 271-8227

Baldvin has been working as a massage therapist for over 15 years. During such time, he has had the amazing opportunity to take such extensive courses such as myofascial release, sports massage, deep muscle tissue therapy and stretching, cranial sacral massage, and TMJ treatments. He continues to actively learn new techniques through such continuing education programs.



## SPORTS

Sports Massage Therapy is used by athletes, both professional and amateur, as part of their regular physical routine. Our registered massage therapists understand the importance of sports rehabilitation and can assist you in the path to recovery, through exercise and rehabilitation exercises.

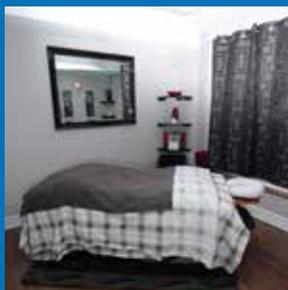
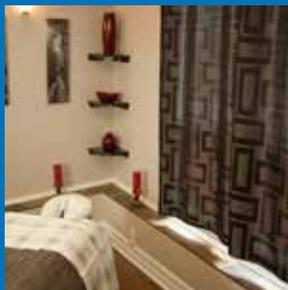
**Therapeutic Massage** therapists assists athletes of all ages in preventing injury and enhancing recovery with regular massage visits. They have handled stress and strain and accidental injuries to help correct muscular imbalances, overuse injuries, and any postural issues occurring.

## OPTIMIZE HEALTH

Massage therapy treatment has a therapeutic effect on the body and optimizes health and well-being by acting on the muscular, nervous and circulatory systems. Physical function can be developed, maintained and improved; and physical dysfunction and pain and the effects of stress can be relieved or prevented through the use of massage therapy.

## PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

There are tremendous benefits to be achieved through regular massage therapy treatments from a registered massage therapist. Whether your need is to have a moment of relaxation, reduce muscle tension or attain relief from chronic pain, a **Therapeutic Massage** can enhance your overall sense of emotional and physical well-being as well as your quality of life.



Come and visit us in our newly renovated massage rooms.

We try to make your visit a time of complete relaxation, with your choice of music to soft lighting.



Designed by  
Rent a Drupal  
[www.rentadrupal.com](http://www.rentadrupal.com)

## MASSAGE FOR ALL AGES

Massage therapy benefits people of all ages. While it benefits the injured, the ill and the stressed, the strength of massage therapy in preventing illness and conditions before they develop cannot be overlooked.

## BENEFITS

Therapeutic massage is an important part of your health maintenance plan, by:

- » Reducing or eliminating pain
- » Improving joint mobility
- » Improving circulation
- » Improving immune system functioning
- » Increasing lymphatic drainage
- » Reducing depression and anxiety
- » Reducing tension within muscles
- » Increasing body awareness

---

Baldvin Vidarsson

45 Windcrest Court

Kanata, ON K2T 1B5

(613) 271-8227

[baldvin@therapeuticmassage.ca](mailto:baldvin@therapeuticmassage.ca)

[www.therapeuticmassage.ca](http://www.therapeuticmassage.ca)

